

# Otter Harvest 2004-05

By Brian Dhuey and John Olson

## **Abstract**

Wisconsin trappers registered 1,322 otters during the 2004-05 season, including 1,028 taken with DNR issued permits, 106 taken off reservation by native trappers, 20 taken on reservations, and 168 taken incidentally. This was a decrease of 17% from the otter harvest in 2003-04 and the fourteenth highest harvest since Wisconsin has been registering otters. The counties of highest harvest all came from the northern part of the state. They were Burnett (69), Price (66), Polk (65), and Sawyer (64).

## **Background**

Bluett (1985) described the procedures for obtaining otter tags, and registering/tagging otters in Wisconsin. Dhuey, et al. (2004) described the results of the 2003-04 otter trapping season.

## **Methods**

Non-Chippewa trappers are required to obtain an otter trapping permit before pursuing otter in Wisconsin. The application fee for an otter permit is \$3.00, (included in the Patron license fee). Trappers were required to register all harvested otters with the DNR.

The 2004-05 otter season ran from 4 December 2004 – 30 April 2005 in the Northern Zone and 4 December 2004 - 6 March 2005 in the Central and Southern Zones (Fig. 1). The area of kill (county and deer management unit), date of kill, sex of the animal, type of trap used, type of animal (fur farm or wild), and the name and address of the trapper were recorded for each otter registered. These data were entered into the DNR UNIX computer by district personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). Otters trapped by Native Americans on ceded lands were included in the harvest summary. Data on off-reservation treaty otter harvest was provided by the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (Jonathan Gilbert; pers. comm.).

## **Results**

A total of 8,111 applicants applied for the 4,240 otter tags issued in 2004-05 season (Table 1). The average number of tags per applicant was 0.60 in the Northern Zone, 0.48 in the Central Zone, and 0.41 in the Southern Zone. There were approximately 27% more applicants for permits and 12% less permits available than in 2003-04 season. In addition, a Chippewa allocation of 70 otters was agreed to for their use during the Chippewa off-reservation trapping season (1 November 2004 to 31 March 2005) on ceded lands.

A total of 1,322 otters were harvested during the 2004-05 season. This was a decrease of 16% from last year. Permit success for the 2004-05 season (24%) was less than last year (28%). (Table 1.) Chippewa trappers took 106 otters on ceded lands; 48 more than were harvested in the 2003-04 season (these data were provided by the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, P.O. Box 9, Odanah, WI, 54861). A total of 20 otter were registered with kill locations on Wisconsin's reservations. Native Americans are now registering a portion of on-reservation kills with DNR personnel. A total of 168 otters were registered as incidental, these

were taken accidentally to other trapping activity or road kills. All of these kill types are included in the statewide totals.

The average price paid for otter pelts by furbuyers was \$78.03 in 2004-05. This was less than the \$89.49 paid for otter pelts in 2003-04, but was well above the long-term average of \$40.97 (Table 2).

Burnett county had the highest number of otters harvested (69) followed by Price (66), Polk (65), and Sawyer (64) counties (Fig. 1). Deer management Unit 13 was the leading unit of harvest with 48 otters registered (Fig. 2).

More males (769; 58.2%) were trapped than females (504; 38.1%). Forty-nine (3.7%) registration forms did not report the sex of the otter or reported the sex as unknown.

Body-gripping traps accounted for 83% of the otters harvested in 2004-05, and foothold traps accounted for 16% of the otter trapped. One percent of otters trapped were caught in snares.

Thirteen percent of the otters harvested this season were reported as being incidentally taken while trapping for other species. The regular beaver season preceded the opening and ran concurrent with the otter season. The WDNR Furbearer Advisory Committee recommended a statewide harvest goal of 1,200 otter in the 2004-05 season. Quota by zone is: North Zone, 720; Central Zone, 300; South Zone, 180.

### **Literature Cited**

Bluett, R. 1985. The 1983-84 Otter Tagging Report. Wis. Dep. Nat. Resour. 7 pp.

Dhuey B. J. Olson and A. Roth. 2004. Otter Harvest, 2003-04. IN: The Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys Report. August 2004. Document on file at the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Bureau of Research, Monona, WI. 53711.

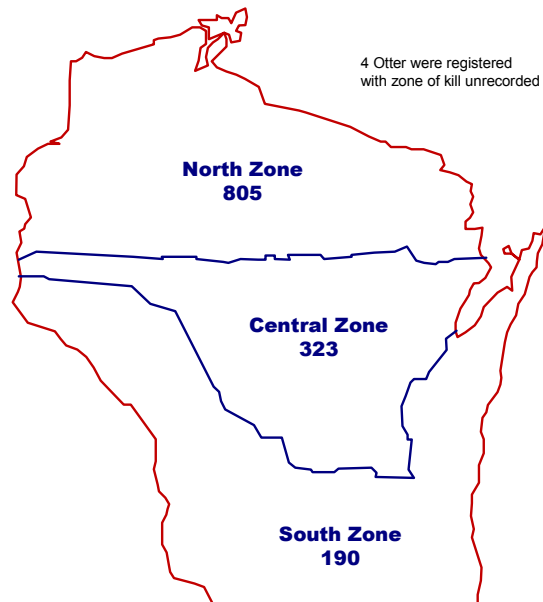
**Table 1.** *2004-05 Wisconsin state otter harvest goal and applicant results.*

Zone	State Harvest Goal	Permits Issued	Applicants	Tags/ Applicant	State Harvest*	Percent Success
North	650	2,400	4,033	0.60	624	26.0%
Central	300	1,169	2,452	0.48	265	22.7%
South	180	671	1,626	0.41	139	20.7%
Total	1,130	4,240	8,111	0.52	1,028	24.2%

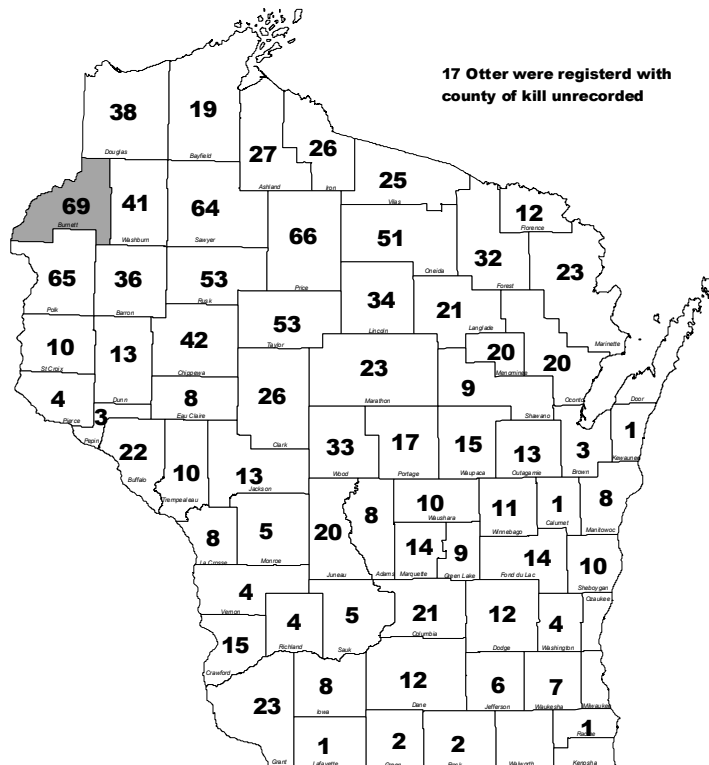
\* Does not include incidental or tribal otter harvest.

**Table 2.** *The annual number of otter permits mailed to Wisconsin trappers, total registered otter harvest, and average pelt price, 1976-2005.*

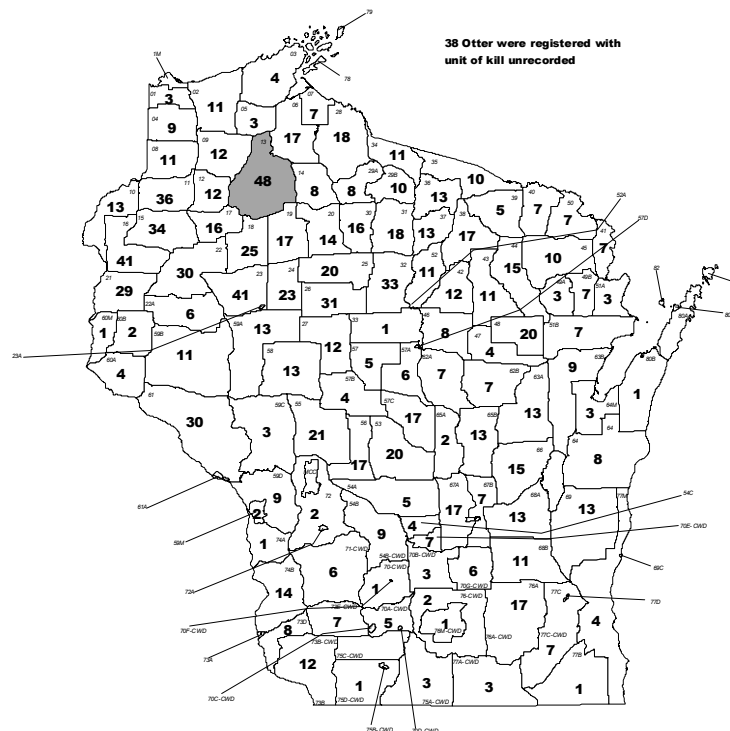
Year	Number of Permits Mailed	Total Registered Harvest	Average Pelt Price (\$)
1976-77	5,050	1,271	
1977-78	5,218	1,113	47.83
1978-79	4,914	962	82.15
1979-80	5,754	1,448	60.05
1980-81	7,269	1,122	33.79
1981-82	8,256	1,024	26.89
1982-83	7,403	960	24.70
1983-84	8,294	995	25.68
1984-85	7,516	1,213	24.41
1985-86	7,104	960	22.84
1986-87	6,599	1,588	29.62
1987-88	9,360	1,724	23.87
1988-89	7,838	1,127	20.14
1989-90	6,360	1,213	24.11
1990-91	4,613	744	14.39
1991-92	2,799	762	12.50
1992-93	3,201	969	33.24
1993-94	5,531	1,130	57.30
1994-95	9,282	1,816	48.76
1995-96	14,800	1,517	44.47
1996-97	16,457	2,443	45.66
1997-98	15,429	2,704	43.70
1998-99	10,898	1,530	37.05
1999-2000	12,510	2,178	46.48
2000-01	11,180	1,844	54.01
2001-02	12,119	2,601	56.00
2002-03	8,370	2,053	77.12
2003-04	4,810	1,588	89.49
2004-05	4,240	1,322	78.03



**Figure 1.** *2004-05 Otter kill by Zones.*



**Figure 2.** The 2004-05 otter harvest by county. The leading otter harvest county is shaded.



**Figure 3.** The 2004-05 otter harvest by deer management unit. The leading management unit is shaded.